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State Of the Nations Of Spies and Spying

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The public record does not, of course, show whether Mr. Wynne ever brought or sent home any useful secret information. He may have picked up a minor tidbit here or there. But he almost certainly was not in the big-time branch of the business.

Messrs. Lonsdale and Abel were in the big time. They were professionals who had been through all the highest postgraduate branches of Soviet spy training. They knew the art from invisible ink to double agents and propaganda.

Therefore neither exchange was equal. The West in each case gave up a really prize catch for a person of small spy-business value. Wynnes and Powerses theoretically are more expendable and replaceable than Abels and Lonsdales.



Caught Any
Cloak-and-Dagger Men Lately?

In each case the West found itself boxed into the unequal exchange for a reason which operates in the West but not in Communist countries. In a Communist country the public does not even know that the individual has disappeared. Even if the public did know, it would have no way of demanding a repatriation.

In the West the public knows. It knew that Mr. Powers was shot down and promptly demanded, in effect, that he be ransomed. The British public knew that Mr. Wynne had been arrested and sent to jail. It, too, demanded ransoming. The press kept the Wynne story going and the public conscious and agitated.

In these two cases, Washington and London suffered the same constant pressure from press and public to get the prisoner released. A price had to be paid, and was paid.

In this sort of thing the West always of necessity is at a disadvantage.

But there is another side to the coin. Moscow could put a premium value on Messrs. Wynne and Powers because of the humanitarian angle, but they badly wanted to get their own boys home again. It is not a good advertisement for their spies to be languishing in Western jails. It reminds people that big-time Soviet spies have been caught.

The truth of the matter is that in the spy-catching business the West has been doing rather better of late than the Soviets. They have lost several real equivalents story going and the public loses messenger boys.